

Frequently Asked Questions

1) How does the electronic application process work?

We suggest you first request the fingerprint card through our website and finish the fingerprinting process. When that is done, go to the National Conference of Bar Examiners (NCBE) website and complete the application. When you complete the application, follow the NCBE instructions for printing and mailing it to the NCBE. You will pay the investigative fee required by the NCBE to the NCBE when you file the application. That same day, you should mail us the \$325 filing fee and the fingerprint card. You can also send us the certificates of admission, regular practice, and good moral character if you have those ready. If not, just indicate in your cover letter that they will be forwarded separately. Remember, they should be forwarded within a month or two or they might hold up consideration of your application.

2) How long does the process take?

The process normally takes from two to four months. All applications are filed with the National Conference of Bar Examiners (NCBE), which does a character and fitness investigation. The length of the process may depend on whether (1) you answer all questions on the application and complete all required forms, (2) the addresses you provide are complete and accurate, and (3) your references respond to NCBE inquiries in a timely manner.

3) Does an admission on motion applicant have to have graduated from an ABA accredited law school?

No.

4) Is Iowa a state that requires reciprocity from the applicant's jurisdiction?

No, Iowa allows any attorney who meets the criteria to be admitted.

5) It will take me awhile to gather the certificates and affidavits under Iowa Court Rule 31.13(1) (a)-(c). Do I have to obtain all my certificates before filing my application?

No. The application can proceed without the certificates. If you anticipate any difficulty in obtaining the certificates, you should file the application with the NCBE and indicate in a cover letter to us when you pay the fee that the certificates will be forthcoming. That way NCBE can begin its investigation in a timely manner. However, if the certificates take more than a month or two, it could delay consideration of the application.

6) Are there forms for the certificates?

No. The certificates should just be tailored to the language of the rule and the applicant's particular circumstances.

7) Can I just send in a picture of my license to satisfy the certificate-of-admission requirement?

No, the certificate must come from the bar admissions authority or the supreme court in your state. A certificate of good standing that provides the date of admission will work.

8) Will a certificate of good standing satisfy the certificate of regular practice requirement?

No. A certificate of good standing only indicates you have maintained your license. It does not attest to your regular practice of law over a sustained period. It is this prolonged period of regular practice that entitles the applicant to the deference afforded by admission on motion.

9) My prior practice consisted solely of transactional law so I do not know a judge, clerk, or administrative law judge. How can I satisfy the regular practice certificate requirement?

Oftentimes you or someone in your firm/legal department will know a judge or clerk and can explain your prior practice details and get them to certify your practice over the requisite period. If you absolutely cannot get the certificate, you may file a petition to file an alternative certificate under Iowa Ct. R. 31.13(1) (b).

10) My prior practice consisted solely of transactional law so I do not know a judge, clerk, or administrative law judge. How can I satisfy the good moral character certificate requirement?

The court does not allow a waiver of the good moral character certificate. However, you can attempt to get one from a judge or clerk in Iowa if you cannot get one from a judge or clerk in your former jurisdiction.

11) Will a minor criminal infraction disqualify me from being admitted on motion?

Ordinarily, the answer is no. The court will look at all criminal history information in light of the totality of the circumstances regarding the applicant's character and fitness to practice law. The court will consider factors such as the level of the offense, the nature of the conduct, the age of the applicant at the time of the conduct, the harm to the victim, and the applicant's rehabilitation. However, failing to list a criminal charge or conviction may indicate a lack of candor, which could be grounds for denial of an application. You should always err on the side of disclosure, even if the conviction has been expunged.

12) Will a felony criminal conviction act as an absolute bar to admission?

While a felony conviction is not an absolute bar to admission, it will certainly be a significant factor in the court's decision. The applicant will have an uphill battle in establishing he or she possesses the requisite character and fitness to practice law. As noted above, the court will carefully review the circumstances surrounding the offense, any further criminal activity since the offense occurred, and the applicant's showing of rehabilitation.

13) If the court grants my application for admission on motion, how do I get admitted?

When you receive notice that your admission on motion application has been granted, the letter will indicate the steps you need to take to be sworn in by a justice of the Iowa Supreme Court. An applicant may be allowed to be sworn in by an eligible person in the applicant's jurisdiction if the applicant files a petition setting forth exceptional circumstances rendering the applicant unable to appear before an Iowa justice in light of the applicant's professed intent to practice law in Iowa.